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“Navajo Youth to Compete with the Pros”

WINDOW ROCK, AZ. – For the first time in history, young Navajo cowgirls will compete with the pros.

It will be a stunning showdown when 20 young barrel racers from throughout the country will compete for more than \$300 in added prize money during the Fourth of July Celebration and PRCA Pro Rodeo here in the Navajo Nation capital on July 4-6th.

According to Wanda Nelson who works for the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, junior barrel racing is a new event that will be added to the PRCA Pro Rodeo in partnership with the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association this year. In fact, Nelson said, a majority of the entries are Navajo barrel racers who are 16 years old and under.

“I wanted to add junior barrels and name it ‘Run with the Pros,’” said Nelson who has had a lifelong passion for helping young Navajo athletes. “I want to promote Navajo youth and introduce them into professional rodeo. I hope that one day they will be at the professional level.”

Nelson said it is important that the Navajo Nation support its Navajo athletes, noting, “We need to help our young Navajo athletes develop a positive foundation so they will be



successful in life. I am inviting all rodeo fans to come out and support our Navajo athletes. Who knows, maybe one of these days, they will become a world champion.”

In fact, Nelson said, there will also be several Navajo PRCA rodeo contestants in team roping such as Derrick Begay from Dilcon, Erich Rogers from Round Rock and Ruth Bitsui in barrel racing from Corrales, New Mexico.

Adding to the repertoire, there’s nothing that captures the true spirit of the west more than the sport of wild horse racing. Rodeo fans especially enjoy the excitement of wild horse racing, which is why Nelson said it will also be included in the PRCA Pro Rodeo on July Fourth beginning at 5 p.m.

“Anything can happen in wild horsing, which is what makes it so exciting,” said Nelson. “Wild horse racing is a showcase of down-to-earth outdoor entertainment that displays the true and magnificent skills of an avid horseman.”

Following the increasing appeal of country music, another added attraction during the Fourth of July Celebration will be an event called the Battle of the Bands, which be held on July 6th. Outstanding Navajo country and western bands will demonstrate their rustic elegance and vie for \$3,000 in prize money, according to Phoebe Hardy, coordinator of the Battle of Bands event.

“There are many Navajo people who really love to dance to country and western music,” said Hardy. “Many of these bands have a large following. And it is not unusual to have a country and western dance every weekend on the Navajo Nation.”



Hardy said in addition to the \$3,000 first prize, the winning band will have a unique opportunity to open for Country Music Artist Gary Allen who will perform during the Navajo Nation Fair in September.

“This is the perfect venue for people who want to kick up their high heel boots and show their love for Navajo country and western musicians,” said Hardy. “Music has always been part of Navajo culture – this is a Navajo version of what true country is all about.”

The Battle of the Bands will begin at 4 p.m. on July 6th at the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds and will conclude with a country and western dance at 9 p.m.

For more information about the Fourth of July Celebration and PRCA Pro Rodeo, contact Delilah Goodluck, Public Information Officer at: (928) 871-6632 or (928) 592-2959 or

www.navajonationfair.com

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